

# Anger

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## Help for Overcoming Sinful Anger, Bitterness, Resentment

**This study was put together by Dr. Wayne Mack**

Anger, like every other emotion, may be a good and useful emotion put to constructive, godly use (Mark 3:5; Ps. 7:11; Eph. 4:26). Or it may be a sinful emotion, which is used in ungodly, harmful, and destructive ways. This study is designed to help you discern between sinful and righteous anger and to aid you in overcoming the sinful expressions of anger which are harmful and destructive.

A. At whom or what is your anger most frequently directed?

1. Other people \_\_\_\_\_
2. Your circumstances or environment \_\_\_\_\_
3. Yourself \_\_\_\_\_
4. God \_\_\_\_\_

B. Describe the last three situations in which you became angry.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

C. Discern and write down what the following verses have to say about the wrong way to handle anger. You are handling in a sinful and unbiblical manner when you:

1. Ephesians 4:26, 27: Refuse to admit that you are angry. Clean up and pretend nothing is wrong. Make this way of dealing with anger a practice.
2. Proverbs 17:14: Pick a fight as soon as you can. Be as nasty as you can.
3. Proverbs 29:11, 20: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Matthew 5:21, 22: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Ephesians 4:31: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Proverbs 26:21: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Proverbs 15:1: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Colossians 3:8: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Romans 12:17, 19: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. 1 Peter 3:9: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. 1 Corinthians 13:5: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Philippians 4:8: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. Discern and write down what the following verses have to say about the *right* way to handle anger. Constantly review what God says about the right way of handling anger and deliberately seek to obey Him. (hint: some of these passages are *action* oriented, and others are *thought* oriented)

1. Romans 12:19-20: Never taken your own revenge; turn the matter of punishment over to God; seek to help your enemy in specific ways.

2. Ephesians 4:26: Acknowledge that you are angry and seek to solve the problems immediately. Don't allow unresolved problems to pile up.

3. Ephesians 4:29: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Ephesians 4:32: \_\_\_\_\_

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5. Matthew 5:43, 44: \_\_\_\_\_
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6. Proverbs 19:11: \_\_\_\_\_
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7. Proverbs 15:1: \_\_\_\_\_
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8. Proverbs 15:28: \_\_\_\_\_
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9. Proverbs 16:32: \_\_\_\_\_
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10. Proverbs 25:28: \_\_\_\_\_
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11. Proverbs 14:29: \_\_\_\_\_
- 
12. Proverbs 29:11: \_\_\_\_\_
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13. Psalm 37:1-11: \_\_\_\_\_
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14. 1 Peter 3:9: \_\_\_\_\_
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15. Galatians 5:16-23: \_\_\_\_\_
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16. Romans 8:28, 29: \_\_\_\_\_
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17. Matthew 5:1-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:18: \_\_\_\_\_
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18. Ephesians 5:20: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

19. 1 Corinthians 10:13: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

20. Genesis 50:20: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

21. James 4:6: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

22. 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

23. Matthew 18:21-35: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- E. Examine your own life in the light of Matthew 5:1-12; Galatians 5:22, 23; and II Peter 1:5-8 and list the qualities mention in these passages which are most lacking in your life. Ask a godly Christian for his evaluation. God wants to use all circumstances to develop these qualities in your life. Sinful anger overlooks this fact

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_

- F. Consider how God may use your present irritations and annoyances to reveal your lack of these qualities and to develop them. When you are tempted to become sinfully angry, consider God's purpose for the trial.
- G. Consider and write out some of the benefits that your problems or irritations may bring to you. Remember Romans 8:28; Job 23:10. God has a good purpose for everything that comes into the Christian's life.

1. Isaiah 43:1-3: Deeper communion and fellowship with God.

2. I Corinthians 11:31, 32: Stimulates self-examination.

3. Psalm 119:71: New insight into Scripture.

4. Romans 5:2-5: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. II Corinthians 1:3-6: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Hebrew 12:5-11: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. II Corinthians 12:7-10: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Matthew 5:10-12: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. I Peter 4:12-16: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Psalm 119:67: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Psalm 50:15: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Philippians 3:10: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. James 1:2-5: \_\_\_\_\_

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14. 1 Peter 1:7: \_\_\_\_\_

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- H. Which of the following do you consider to be your “rights”? Usually we become sinfully angry because we think some “right” is being denied.

Right to have and control personal belongings	
Right to privacy	
Right to have and express personal opinions	
Right to earn and use money	
Right to plan your own schedule	
Right to respect	
Right to have and choose friends	
Right to belong, be loved, be accepted	
Right to be understood	
Right to be supported	
Right to make your own decisions	
Right to determine your own future	
Right to have good health	
Right to date	
Right to be married	
Right to have children	
Right to be considered worthwhile and important	
Right to be protected and cared for	
Right to be appreciated	
Right to travel	
Right to have the job you want	
Right to a good education	
Right to be a beautiful person	
Right to be treated fairly	

Right to be desired	
Right to have fun	
Right to raise children your way	
Right to security and safety	
Right to fulfilled hopes and aspirations	
Right to be successful	
Right to have others obey you	
Right to have your own way	
Right to be free of difficulties and problems	
Others _____	

I. Which of the aforementioned “rights” are you being denied, and by whom?

<i>Right</i>	<i>By Whom</i>

J. Consciously recognize that, if you are a Christian, you and all you have and are (your rights included) belong to God (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Rom. 12:1; Ps. 24:1). Acknowledge this and dedicate all that you are and have, including your “rights” to God. Trust Him to take care of His property. Cease to think in terms of “rights” and concentrate on God’s will and purpose and promises. For a while, until the fact that all your “rights” belong to God reaches the awareness level, you will want to specifically dedicate your “rights” to God on a regular basis.

K. The following is a recommended procedure you should follow if you desire to “put off” the sinful, destructive, unbiblical use of anger and “put on” the biblical, constructive use of anger. When something occurs which might lead to bitterness (clamming up, internalization of anger, resentment, hurt feelings, hostility, a grudge) or an explosion (angry words, verbal abuse, accusations, physical abuse, gossip, slander, retaliation of some sort, blaming, sarcasm, put downs, exaggeration, shouting), you should immediately put the following

procedure into practice. You must do this *every* time you are tempted to become sinfully angry. Remember, “there is a way of escape” (1 Cor. 10:13), “the fruit of the Spirit is... *self-control*” (Gal. 5:22, 23), “God has... given us the Spirit of *power*, and *love* and *self-control*” (II Tim. 1:7). With promises like these from a God who cannot lie, there is no excuse for defeat, and there is every reason for victory. Here, then, is a procedure for victory. When a potentially distressing, fretful circumstance arises:

1. Immediately ask God to help you handle it in a God-honoring, biblical way.
2. Remind yourself that God is sovereign. He could have prevented this circumstance from arising. He can now empower you to face it, and if you face it His way it will serve a positive, constructive purpose.
3. Thank God for the victory He is going to give you and the blessing He is going to bring into your life through this trial.
4. Consider what witness, service, modeling opportunities this situation may provide. Others are watching you, and you can now demonstrate the sufficiency of Christ, the reality and power of Christianity, the tremendous relevancy and practicality of the Word of God in a fantastic way. Think of this and expect God to use you.
5. Examine yourself to see if you have done anything to promote the situation. Have you been lazy, irresponsible, stubborn, critical, wasteful, ungrateful, bossy, haughty, overly demanding, a nag, inconsiderate, unwilling to change or give in to other people, unmerciful, rude, crude, proud, too stern or austere, unfriendly, boastful, deceitful, sloppy, disorganized, jealous or envious, unmannerly, manipulative, suspicious, selfish, morose, solemn, sensitive, negative, and pessimistic? Often we sow the wind and reap the whirlwind. With what measure we dish it out we receive it back. Our problems are often the mirror of our own faults. According to the Bible, we roll a stone and it rolls back on us; we dig a pit and then fall into it ourselves; we are taken captive by our iniquities.
6. Consider what character quality God may be trying to develop in you through this situation. If I am being unjustly accused, He may be trying to develop meekness or love or joy or patience or self-control or forgiveness, or poverty of spirit. My initial, natural response to the situation may pin-point a deficiency and reveal what God wants to do in my life. I must acknowledge my deficiency and ask God to use circumstances to develop Christian traits to overcome these deficiencies.
7. Discern which “rights” of yours are being denied or neglected in this situation. Do you think you have a right to be respected, and is that why you are becoming upset because your wife won’t fulfill your wishes? Do you think you have a right to be appreciated, and is that why you are becoming resentful toward someone who has criticized you or won’t



express his indebtedness to you? Identify what you think you are being denied and then turn the matter over to God. You belong to Him. He knows what you really need (Phil 4:19). Trust Him to take care of you. He knows what things you have need of even before you ask (Matt. 6:25-34). Believe that God is much wiser than you. He knows much better than you what you really need, and He will supply what you need if you handle matters His way.

Turning your rights over to God doesn't mean you must become a doormat. It does not mean that you never make your desires known, or that you never oppose, rebuke, insist, exhort, or seek to correct a person. It does mean that you seek to do what you do in a biblical, God-honoring fashion; for biblical, God-honoring reasons; out of biblical, God-honoring motives. It does mean that after you have done all that you may legitimately do, you leave the results to God and believe that He will bring to pass what is right and good for you. God's promise is that they who fear Him and seek Him shall not lack any good thing (Ps. 34:8-10). You must fulfill your biblical responsibilities and then leave your "rights" to God. When He gives them back to you, consider them to be privileges and thank Him for them.

8. Seek to associate with those who are calm, self-controlled, handling problems God's way. You will learn from them, be strengthened and encouraged by them in the right way, and become like them (Prov. 13:20; II Tim 2:22; Heb. 10:24, 25; Prov. 22:24, 25; 29:22; I Cor. 15:33; Heb. 3:12, 13; Prov. 27:17).
9. Discern specifically what God wants you to do and how He wants you to act at this time. Reflect on biblical illustrations and exhortations that are applicable to your situation. Go over the passages mentioned under points C, D, E, and G of this study. Seek to obey these biblical insights implicitly. Anything less is disobedience (sin), and besides that anything less will not solve but compound the problem. The question is—how does God want you to handle the situation? Certain things you must not do. Certain things you must. Plan a biblical course of action. Do you need to confess your sin? (Compare K-5) Do you need to make restitution? Have you taken something that you never returned? Have you gossiped? Have you withheld something that you should have given? Should you agree to separate and give the matter some thought and prayer and then try to resolve the difficulty? What words would solve the problem rather than attack the other person or compound the situation (Eph. 4:29, 30)? Should you be willing to compromise or even give in to the other person? Have you tried to look at the situation from the other person's viewpoint? Have you tried to role play the situation, taking the other person's place? Have you put the best possible interpretation on what the other person has said or done? Do you allow things to build up or do you deal with one issue at a time? Do you need to seek the counsel of some biblical counselor (your pastor, another godly Christian, or a professional Christian counselor) to help you discover God's way of handling the situation? How can you express kindness and concern for the person with whom you are

having problems (Rom. 12:14-21)? As a Christian you must not attempt to overcome evil with evil, but with good. You must neither hold resentment under, nor give full vent to, your anger. Rather you must learn how to control your anger and use it for constructive purposes. You must release your anger under control. This can be done only if you allow your feelings to activate your words and actions and if you learn the habit of being guided by a mind that is controlled and marinated and instructed by solid biblical principles. To make sure that this happens (to change the sinful habit patterns which have become deeply ingrained), it may be helpful for a time to actually write out how you should deal with tough situations, how you should respond, exactly what you should say. Check your plan out with someone who is wise in spiritual matters, and if this person agrees that yours is a biblical course of action, put the plan into operation. Do this again and again until it becomes rather normal for you to handle situations in a biblical fashion. This, of course, is work—but it's worth it. God wants you to live this way. Your relationships with others will improve. Your health may even improve. You'll be happier and your testimony for Christ will be much more powerful. This plan for overcoming sinful anger will work if you will put it to work.

- L. Habit patterns and responses that have been part of us for years are not always easy to change. In fact, the reverse is usually true. But, by the power of God, we can change. We can control our anger. We don't need to continue to explode or become bitter. Thus far we have seen that to change we must plan ahead, we must think biblically, and exercise self-control when stress situations arise. In addition to these things, the person who wants to change should review what he is doing on a daily basis. Daily fill out the following chart, which will reveal your progress in changing sinful patterns. The chart was developed by Dr. John Broger.

	<i>Problem or Circumstance</i>	<i>Sounded off</i>	<i>Took It and Ground My Teeth</i>	<i>Followed the Scripture (which one?)</i>
1.	_____			
2.	_____			
3.	_____			
4.	_____			
5.	_____			
6.	_____			
7.	_____			

8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_
14. \_\_\_\_\_
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16. \_\_\_\_\_
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31. \_\_\_\_\_
32. \_\_\_\_\_
33. \_\_\_\_\_
34. \_\_\_\_\_